IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) A method for obtaining a recombinant fusion protein comprising a scaffold of a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain, said recombinant fusion protein being capable of forming multimers in soluble form in a prokaryotic host cell, the method including the steps of

(i) providing a prokaryotic host cell carrying a nucleic acid encoding said recombinant protein operably linked to a promoter functional in said prokaryotic cell;

(ii) culturing the host cell under conditions wherein said recombinant protein is expressed; and

(iii) recovering the recombinant protein wherein said protein is recovered in multimeric form without performing a scaffold refolding step.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the recombinant protein is present at least at a concentration of at least 2 mg/l of cell culture.

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the host prokaryotic cell is *E. coli*.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 3 wherein *E. coli* is selected from strain C41(DE3)[B96070444], C43(DE3)[B96070445] or CO214(DE3)[NCIMB40884], or other strains resistant to the toxicity of overexpressed recombinant proteins.

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1 wherein the recombinant protein comprises the C4bp core protein fused to a heterologous polypeptide.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1 wherein said heterologous polypeptide is a TNF receptor protein.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein said heterologous polypeptide is a BAFF-binding portion of BAFF-R.

8. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1 wherein said heterologous polypeptide is a thrombopoeitin agonist peptide IEGPTLRQWLAARA or somatostatin.

9. (Original) An isolated nucleic acid comprising a sequence which encodes a fusion protein of a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain and BAFF-R.

10. (Original) An isolated nucleic acid comprising a sequence which encodes a fusion protein of a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain and a thrombopoetin agonist peptide IEGPTLRQWLAARA or somatostatin.

11. (Original) A prokaryotic expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding a fusion protein of a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain and a heterologous polypeptide operably linked to a promoter functional in prokaryotic cells.

12. (Original) A bacterial host cell transformed with the expression vector of claim 11.

13. (Original) A protein comprising a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain fused to BAFF-R.

14. (Original) A protein comprising a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain fused to a thrombopoeitin agonist peptide IEGPTLRQWLAARA.

15. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1 which further comprises formulating said recombinant protein into a composition comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for treating a condition in a patient, the condition being associated with raised serum levels of BAFF, said method comprising the steps of administering to a patient a therapeutically effective amount of the protein of claim 14 ~~or nucleic acid of claim 9~~.

17. (Original) A method according to claim 16 wherein the condition is systemic lupus erythematosis.

18. (Currently Amended) A eukaryotic expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding the protein of claim 13 ~~or 14~~ operably linked to a promoter functional in eukaryotic cells.

19. (Original) A eukaryotic host cell transformed with the vector of claim 18.

20. (Original) Use of the expression vector of claim 18 in a method of treatment of the human or animal body.

21. (Original) A eukaryotic expression vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding a recombinant fusion protein comprising a scaffold of a C-terminal core protein of C4bp alpha chain for the use in the treatment of the human or animal body.